

Policy Brief

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CROSS-BORDER LIVESTOCK MOBILITY:

Challenges for West Africa

Christian Corniaux, CIRAD, UMR Selmet, PPZS, Dakar, Senegal

Brigitte Thébaud, NCG, Nordic Consulting Group

Annabelle Powell, AFL, Acting For Life

Andrea Apolloni, CIRAD, UMR Astre, Dakar, Senegal

Ibra Touré, CIRAD, UMR Selmet, Montpellier, France

Cross-border transhumance is all too often reduced to an activity that generates conflicts that can easily be resolved by closing borders. This note to policymakers paints a much more complex picture. Pastoral mobility in West Africa contributes tens of billions of CFA francs to the economy every year in all host areas. In a region with a volatile security situation and employment and poverty challenges, the economic, social and political dimensions of transhumance are critical. Regulated, peaceful cross-border mobility would be an example for regional integration in the main sector concerned by sub-regional trade in West Africa. This challenge represents an opportunity for policymakers to adopt a truly regional vision and to work towards greater stability in the Sahel.

In West Africa, livestock movements during cross-border transhumance are considered outdated and a source of conflict (figure 1). Transhumant pastoralists are often seen as “locusts”, contributing nothing to either the host economy or to the livestock sector. Some coastal states suggest the total closure of borders, such as Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Benin, while others opt for temporary closure, such as Togo. These restrictions on mobility

clearly threaten the future of pastoral herding. Yet mobility is the very basis of pastoralism, which directly concerns more than 20 million individuals, especially in the Sahel. In a volatile security context, and in a region characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment, is it reasonable to support this restrictive path? In other words, what are the challenges of safeguarding pastoral mobility for West Africa



Figure 1. Burkinabe herd returning from transhumance in northern Togo.



Start of transhumance (eastern Burkina Faso, 2016). © G. Coulon/Tendance floue pour AFL, 2016.

Pastoral mobility, from a Sahelian to a sub-regional issue

Regional interdependencies have increased since the 1980s within changing areas.

Until the recurrent droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, pastoral mobility was relatively unrestricted and confined globally to the Sahel countries. Indeed, from the 1950s, a number of pastoral hydraulic works built in dry and sub-humid areas opened up regions that were previously inaccessible in the dry season because of water scarcity. After the rainy season, herds also moved, where possible, towards wetlands or rivers (Senegal River Valley, Inner Niger Delta) and to post-harvest agricultural land

(grazing in exchange for fertilisation) or to the huge territories under long fallow.

During the last drought events of the 1980s, up to 80% of herds were decimated in some pastoral zones, and this mortality opened up areas for surviving herds. People and animals also migrated to the south, in the Sahel countries and even in the coastal countries, joining livestock farmers who had been living for decades in northern Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, the decline in trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and crossbreeding by livestock farmers made it easier to move zebu and zebu cross cattle herds to the south, these animals being less susceptible to this disease. Not all of these

farmers returned to the Sahel zone after the crisis. Some stayed in their host areas, maintaining links with pastoralists in their areas of origin and forging new ones with those in their new location.

But since the 1980s, population growth has been altering the structure of pastoral and agro-pastoral areas. Human and animal population densities are increasing and pastoral areas are shrinking due to the expansion of agricultural land and of irrigated areas around water resources. In agro-pastoral areas, fallow periods are now limited. Moreover, farmers also often rear livestock. Competition for water and rangelands is therefore increasing and mobility is becoming very restricted, especially in the southern



areas. Yet this is where more and more transhumant pastoralists are now to be found looking for pastoral resources in the dry season. The mobility of trade has also increased towards the capital cities of the coastal countries, which are becoming more and more populated, with growing demand for red meat (figure 2; box 1).

The Sahelian and Sudanian pastoral zones are now more interdependent than ever before, and will be even more so in the future. The shared use of land and resources is becoming more complex and needs to be addressed at the regional level.

Cross-border transhumance, an opportunity for household economy in host areas

Mobility is of considerable economic and social importance not only for transhumant populations, but also for host populations.

Demonstrating the volume of trade (purchases and sales) conducted during transhumance is essential in order to show its economic and social role for pastoral families as well as for families in the transit and host areas. But the data available is scarce or fragmented. The goal of the study on pastoral and agro-pastoral resilience in the Sahel was to remedy this problem at the level of West Africa (Thébaud, 2017; box 2). The survey involved 386 families along the main cross-border transhumance routes, from five different Sahel countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger (figure 4). It was conducted in camps at the end of the 2015 rainy season and concerned transhumance in 2014-2015.

Buying... Figure 5 shows that, on average, every family spends around 1.2 million CFA francs during transhumance. Two thirds of this spending is on food and feed. The proportion spent on animal feed is particularly high in the

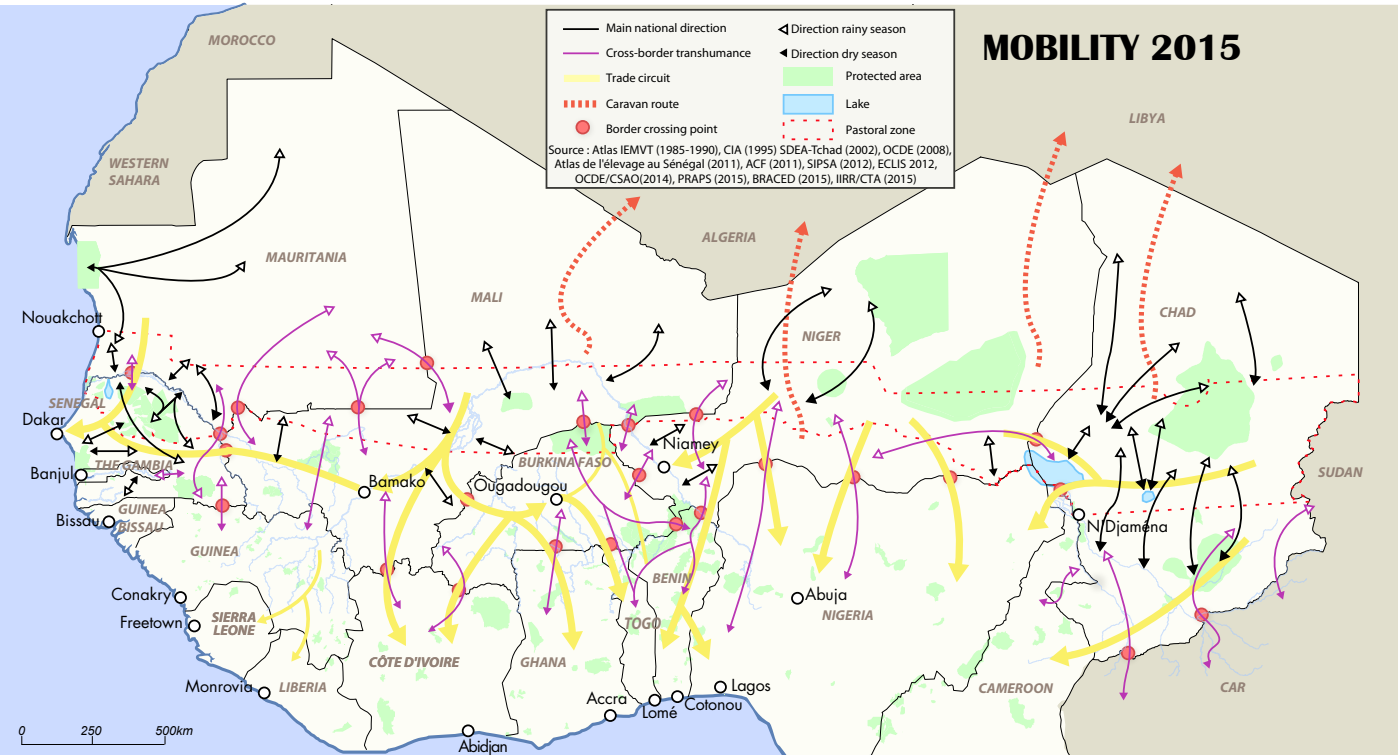


Figure 2. Livestock mobility in West Africa. (From Corniaux et al., 2016)

THE WEST AFRICAN RED MEAT INDUSTRY IS ALMOST SELF-SUSTAINING

West Africa imports very little red meat (beef, lamb and goat), which is not the case for chicken (figure 3). In other words, extensive pastoral systems – which are the main suppliers of urban markets – have thus far been able to meet demand in terms of volume and price. Reducing livestock mobility means reducing the capacity of pastoralists to produce and forcing retailers to increase the price of meat.

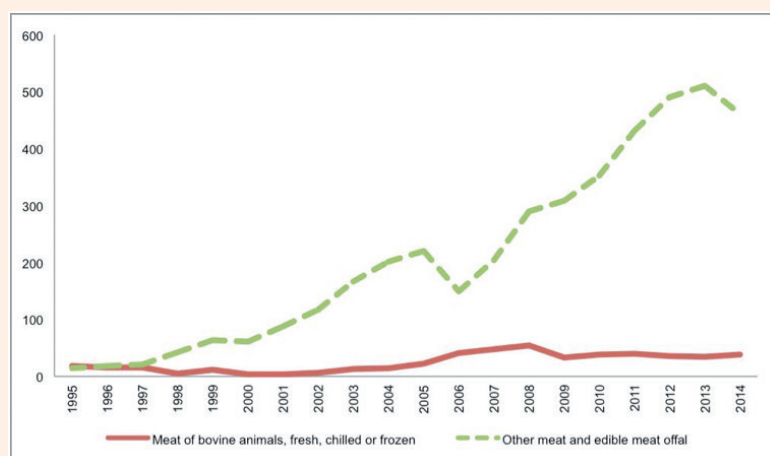


Figure 3. Evolution of meat imports from 1995 to 2014 in the ECOWAS region, in millions of USD.
(Source: <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/>)

sales account for respectively 5%, 11% and 12% of the animals under transhumance. In total, average sales amount to 1.3 million CFA francs, a figure in line with that of family spending.

Every year, transhumance provides a considerable supply of animals for people living in host areas – animal traction, fattening, hoarding, manure – and for cattle markets.

Pastoral mobility, an opportunity for regional integration

For West Africa, transhumance is therefore both a social and an economic issue, especially as it is added to trade mobility, on foot or by vehicle, which supplies all markets in West African capitals (box 1). But it is also a political issue. In a volatile security context in the Sahel, the states need to give far greater attention to

budget of families from Senegal and Mauritania. The level of spending on animal feed depends largely on the onset of the rainy season, which is highly variable depending on the zone and the year.

Across the Sahel, the economic impacts are therefore considerable. They can be estimated at several tens of billions of CFA francs, which every year benefit many actors – retailers, tradespeople, farmers, municipalities, states – in the host areas. This is a far cry from the image of mobile herders leaving nothing behind them. Livestock mobility generates revenue, creates jobs and is a basic tool for poverty eradication.

... and selling. To cover this spending, the families sold on average 5 cows, 12 sheep and 5 goats. These

THE BRACED PROJECT, PASTORAL AND AGRO-PASTORAL RESILIENCE IN THE SAHEL

The BRACED project (Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters), financed by UK-Aid (Department for International Development, United Kingdom) and coordinated by AFL (Acting For Life), focuses on two transnational territories that interconnect Mauritania, Mali and Senegal on the one hand, and Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso on the other. The western territory links southern Mauritania (Trarza, Brakna, Gorgol, Guidimaka, Hodh-el-Gharbi and Hodh-el-Chargui provinces), north-western Mali (Kayes and Koulikoro provinces) and Senegal (Saint-Louis, Louga, Matam and Tambacounda regions). The eastern territory covers livestock movements from northern Mali (Gao region) towards the Burkinabe Sahel (Dori, Djibo, Sebba, Gorom-Gorom) and the eastern part of Burkina Faso (Fada N’Gourma). This territory also covers transhumance routes from western Niger (Tillabéri province). These zones encompass major seasonal movements of transhumant pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, who thus have access to grazing resources and markets, as well as to refuge areas during droughts. The most strategic routes (in red in figure 4) act as a circulatory system enabling herders to move with their animals. They are also trade routes for conveying livestock. In eastern Burkina Faso, for example, Fada N’Gourma is a key destination for pastoralists from Mali (Gao) and Niger (Tillabéri) and an important trade centre supplying rural and urban markets in Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo and Nigeria.

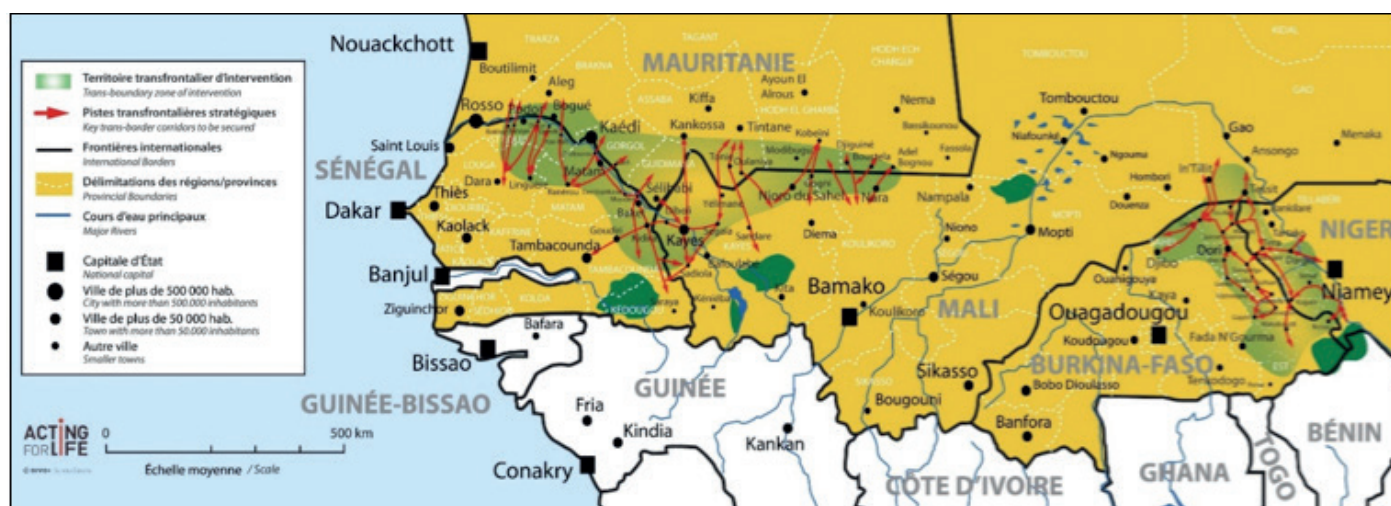


Figure 4. Territories of origin of the 386 families interviewed. (BRACED/AFL, from Thébaud, 2017)

pastoralism, the region's main activity. All of West Africa is concerned. Population growth means that the coastal countries are receiving and will continue to receive increasing numbers of transhumant herders. Local supplies of red meat to the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) region depend on this. What will happen if there is a major drought? Will the borders be closed, at the risk of new unrest with disastrous consequences? Ultimately, the issue is a regional one for a livestock industry

that is undoubtedly the most integrated in terms of production and cross-border trade.

This is why livestock mobility is now the focus of special attention for many actors. Cross-border cooperation has become a mission for some regional organisations, bilateral cooperation programmes, non-governmental organisations and international financial institutions. Action covers different fields, even those previously absent from livestock development programmes: security, education,

decentralisation, human health, employment, migration, etc. However, until recently, these organisations all operated according to their own priorities and, as a consequence, many programmes still overlap in the same areas without any systematic coordination. These initiatives, most of which are regional, could have a greater impact if the national policies underpinning them gave more importance to the challenges of livestock mobility, and if regional integration directives were applied more effectively.

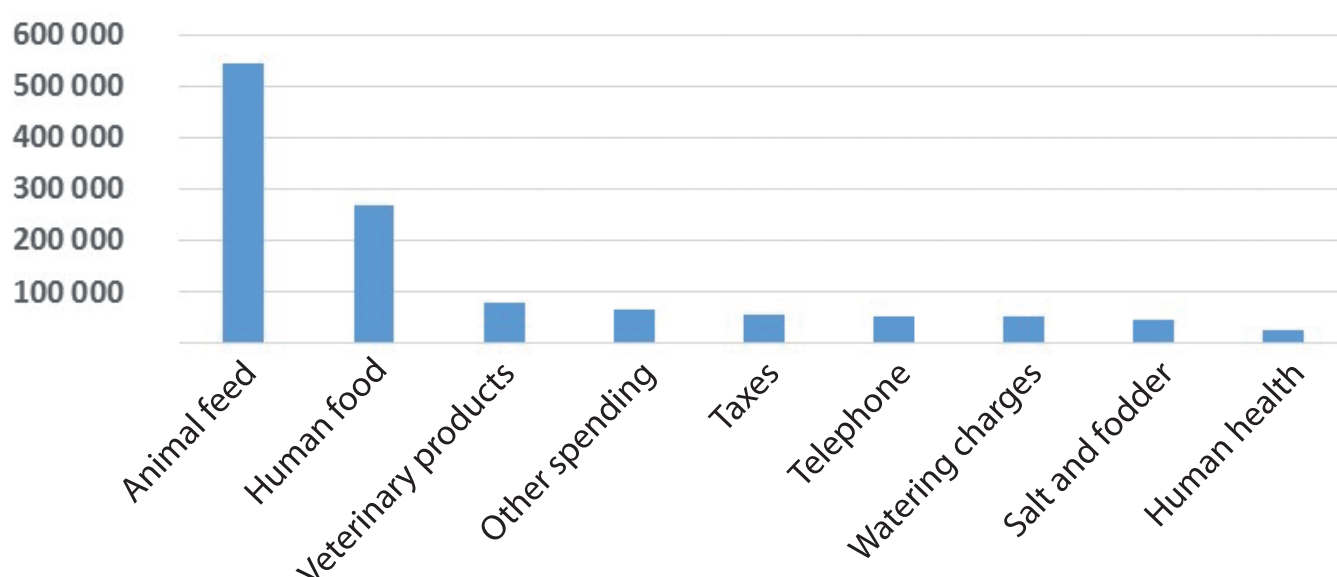


Figure 5. Average spending of families during transhumance in 2014-2015, in CFA francs. (From Thébaud, 2017)



Return from transhumance (northern Togo) © G. Coulon/Tendance floue pour AFL, 2016.

Area surveyed	Budget spent on animal feed (in CFA francs)	Number of families interviewed	Average budget per family (in CFA francs)
Senegal	75 660 000	70	1 080 000
Mauritania (south)	60 320 000	70	862 000
Western Mali	45 370 000	70	648 000
Northern Mali	4 460 000	35	127 000
Northern Burkina Faso	15 120 000	35	432 000
Eastern Burkina Faso	460 000	35	13 000
Western Nigeria	8 260 000	71	116 000

Table 1. Budget spent on animal feed according to area surveyed (from Thébaud, 2017)



PASTORAL MOBILITY AND HEALTH RISKS

The re-emergence of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP) in Senegal after 30 years, the geographical distribution of peste des petits ruminants (PPR) lineages, the recent Rift Valley fever (RVF) epidemics in northern Mauritania (2010), Senegal (2013) and Niger (2016), and the outbreaks of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in North Africa (1999) with a strain of virus similar to the one from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, are all examples of the effect of mobility on the spread of diseases.

First, cross-border livestock movements have the dual effect of exposing healthy animals to new viruses on their arrival and introducing infected animals into disease-free zones. Indeed, herds are often moved before the vaccination of newborn animals, which are then affected by pathogens, either by contact with herds that are already infected, or because they enter the natural habitats of disease vectors, such as fields infested by ticks carrying Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF), wetlands and running waters, the habitats of mosquito vectors of RVF, and forests and savannahs, the habitats of tsetse flies, which are vectors of trypanosomes.

Second, the economic losses linked to animal deaths are considerable, but difficult to estimate, especially for countries with no monitoring and control systems. One control measure is often border closure. This type of measure is not always effective because of its major impact on the livestock trade, but also because of illegal movements. In addition, diseases such as FMD and CBPP, which may have no clinical signs, may nevertheless remain undetected after borders are reopened and periodically trigger epidemics in the region.

Finally, the lack of health facilities along transhumance routes and the distance from health posts forces herders to resort to ineffective self-medication or to use medicines of questionable effectiveness. As a result, the already vulnerable situation of herders is exacerbated, animals treated do not recover, and trade in poor quality medicines (which is often illegal) prospers.

In this context, international transhumance certificates (ITCs) are an important tool where information on the composition of the herd, its vaccination status and its planned route is available. On the other hand, the difficulty and time required to obtain such certificates, harassment at borders and constraints linked to the itinerary discourage herders, who sometimes choose illegal routes instead.

In conclusion

Cross-border transhumance provides welcome supplies of animal products, generates trade and tax revenue at borders, on markets and in municipalities, and supplies fodder for transhumant herders, as well as manure and opportunities for rural people in the transit areas.

Safeguarding and pacifying mobility at the regional level rather than obstructing or opposing it is undoubtedly the path forward. Putting an end to mobility would have serious economic, social and political consequences in both departure areas and host areas.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that efforts are urgently needed to safeguard this mobility.

FIND OUT MORE

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The opinions expressed are those of the authors alone.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Christian Corniaux is a researcher at CIRAD. An agricultural engineer and animal scientist, he works on animal product sectors in the Sahel and West Africa, where he has been based since 1997 (Senegal and Mali). He has coordinated several regional research projects there and has conducted numerous expert studies. He has been in charge of the Pastoralism and Drylands unit since 2013. (www.ppzs.org).

christian.corniaux@cirad.f

Brigitte THEBAUD is a consultant at the Nordic Consulting Group, Copenhagen, Denmark. A socio-economist, her work has focused on pastoralism in the Sahel since the 1980s.

thebaud.brigitte@gmail.com

Annabelle POWELL works at Acting For Life, Paris, France. She is involved in a number of major programmes coordinated by AFL focusing on the resilience of pastoralism in the Sahel.

apowell@acting-for-life.org

Andréa Apolloni is a researcher at CIRAD (UMR ASTRE), based in Dakar, Senegal. He works on livestock mobility in the Sahel.

andrea.apolloni@cirad.fr

Ibra TOURE is a researcher at CIRAD (UMR SELMET), based in Montpellier, France. A geographer, a lot of his work has centred on geographical information systems.

ibra.toure@cirad.fr

POLICY BRIEF

FAO's Sub-regional Team for Resilience, West Africa/Sahel (REOWA), taking the opportunity of the regional workshop on "Food security and resilience to climate change in the Sahel and West Africa", launched a collaboration with CIRAD's West Africa - Dry Zone regional office. The goal of this partnership is to strengthen synergies between actions in the context of projects and studies to increase the resilience of Sahelian communities to shocks and climate change.

The pastoralism-peace-food security nexus rapidly emerged as a focal area of common interest. Substantial progress has been made in this field. For example, the results and lessons learned by the Pastoralism and Drylands platform (www.ppzs.org), the analysis of pastoralists' needs in Chad and Cameroon in the context of the crisis in the Lake Chad basin (FAO, 2017), and the notes to decision-makers prepared in 2016-2017 in the framework of the PRAPS, are all highly instructive initiatives.

However, despite this progress, there is still a great need for research, for information production and dissemination and for strategic advice. It was thus with the goal of further substantiating this knowledge that FAO and CIRAD jointly prepared and published three additional notes to decision-makers. The purpose of these notes is to guide and inform the actions of the regional organisations, states and key partners concerning pastoralism in the Sahel and West Africa.